

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

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October 5, 2011

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The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Room 8-B201
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski,

As the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) takes up the issue of reforming the Universal Service Fund (USF) we strongly encourage the Commission to maintain support for Alaska to ensure current communications services are not degraded and future services are not jeopardized. As a plan is developed, it is critical that targeted reform solutions are put in place to address the unique challenges that Alaska faces. We commend you on your efforts to reform and modernize the Universal Service Fund for the twenty-first century and we strongly encourage you to work to ensure USF's continued sustainability and viability in all of Alaska's difficult to serve areas.

As you are aware, Alaska is a state two and half times the size of Texas. However, unlike Texas and the rest of the Lower 48, Alaska has a mere fraction of the communications infrastructure of its southern counterparts. With many communities accessible only by plane or boat, the need for reliable, modern, and advanced communications services is vital for twenty-first century jobs, education, health care and public safety. The high cost USF ensures the availability of necessary communications capabilities in many parts of Alaska that would otherwise go unserved. Without continued high cost support, tens of thousands of Alaskans will be relegated to using antiquated communications services or having no services at all. In a world of high speed broadband, iPads and smart phones, rural Alaskans would be a large community of "have-nots," lacking essential access to the modern network and its numerous rural-oriented benefits.

As you saw firsthand during your visit, Alaska still faces many ongoing challenges to deploy both basic and advanced communications services. In fact, according to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) National Broadband Map, the vast majority of the land in Alaska is unserved. While telecommunications providers have made progress deploying some last-mile services in many communities, there has been sparse middle mile broadband deployment of any kind, especially when compared to in the majority of the Lower 48. Additionally, according to the FCC's own recently released Fifteenth Wireless Competition Report, wireless deployment throughout Alaska is still in the budding stage. Not only are there a substantial number of communities in Alaska still lacking any wireless service, there is also a huge digital divide developing between Alaska and the rest of the U.S. While the Lower 48 continues to build out its 4G wireless network to both urban and rural areas, Alaska is still in the early stages of building out its 3G network.

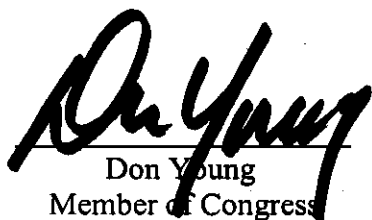
As the FCC develops a plan to reform USF, it is critical that the unique challenges in Alaska be specifically addressed. Unfortunately, the nationally-oriented reform plans proposed to date do not

take into account Alaska's sizable needs, harsh climate, unique topography, and the insular nature of the numerous and diverse communities within the state. Additionally, these nationally-oriented reform plans fail to recognize the need for the statewide support necessary to ensure broadband service to our Alaska Native populations, in both the rural and urban areas. Overall, these national plans would jeopardize Alaska's ongoing deployment of advanced telecommunication services, including both wireline and wireless services, necessary for Alaskans to have the benefits of services enjoyed by others.

As a unified delegation, we assert that Alaska's yearly telecommunication needs are already far greater than the USF support the state receives today. Consequently, while we do not expect USF support to increase beyond what may be necessitated by intercarrier compensation changes, we strongly encourage the Commission to maintain a sufficient level of support to protect current service levels and future developments. Under the capped level of support that Alaska's carriers have proposed, access to modern services including broadband will continue to expand. Unlike most areas in the Lower 48, middle mile costs remain a concern and significant hurdle for many communities in Alaska and we trust the FCC will continue to work to address this serious issue. Ultimately, we believe these vital USF dollars should continue to promote increased wireless and broadband services throughout the state, while also preserving traditional telephone services.

Thank you for taking the time to visit Alaska and we look forward to working with you on this important reform. We welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how reforms being contemplated might affect Alaska. Your staff may contact Kate Geldaker in Senator Mark Begich's office at 202-224-3004, Jeremy Price in Senator Lisa Murkowski's office at 202-224-6665, and Jason Suslavich in Congressman Don Young's office at 202-225-5765 for further details.

Sincerely,


Don Young
Member of Congress


Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator


Mark Begich
United States Senator

c.c. Honorable Michael J. Copps
c.c. Honorable Robert M. McDowell
c.c. Honorable Mignon Clyburn



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

JULIUS GENACHOWSKI
CHAIRMAN

November 17, 2011

The Honorable Mark Begich
United States Senate
144 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Begich:

Thank you very much for your letters regarding the Commission's efforts to reform and modernize the Universal Service Fund (USF) and the intercarrier compensation system (ICC). Your thoughts and concerns were a valuable contribution to our process, and were considered as part of the Commission's deliberations.

On October 27, after many years of hard work on Capitol Hill, among the FCC's Commissioners, and by Commission staff, the Commission unanimously adopted a comprehensive Order overhauling the broken and backward-looking USF and ICC systems for the Internet age. By transitioning these programs to the Connect America Fund, we are delivering on our shared national goal of universal voice and broadband service – including universal mobile voice and broadband service – and enabling increased private sector investment in the indispensable infrastructure of the 21st century: broadband. Importantly, our reforms are fiscally responsible, eliminating waste and inefficiency, using market-based mechanisms to target support where it is needed, and putting the Fund on a firm budget.

The Commission's Order will create jobs beginning in 2012, and lay the foundation for enduring job creation, economic growth, and U.S. global competitiveness for years to come.

For your information, I am enclosing a copy of the Order's "Executive Summary." Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Genachowski", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "J" and a long, horizontal stroke.

Julius Genachowski

Enclosure



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

JULIUS GENACHOWSKI
CHAIRMAN

November 17, 2011

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

JULIUS GENACHOWSKI
CHAIRMAN

November 17, 2011

The Honorable Don Young
U.S. House of Representatives
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Young:

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